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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT/LIBERAL TELLS PDAS KUWAITI DEMOCRACY
STRONG ENOUGH TO RESIST ROYAL FAMILY ENCROACHMENT

REF: KUWAIT 4612

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C/NF) PDAS James Jeffrey met with liberal/independent MP Mohammad Jassem Al-Sager, head of the National Assembly's Foreign Relations Committee on December 9. In addition to discussing regional security issues (septel), Al-Sager gave his assessment of the recent tension between the Government and parliament. Al-Sager said that his group in parliament, the National Action Bloc (NAB), had gone to speak with the Amir after hearing rumors that the Amir might dissolve the parliament unconstitutionally (i.e. by dissolving it and not holding new elections within two months). Al-Sager said he thought that the Amir was indeed considering unconstitutional dissolution, though shortly after his meeting with the NAB the Amir denied ever having considered such a move. Al-Sager went on to say that though the ruling family might not like the strictures of democracy, they could not avoid them. The Amir himself, said Al-Sager, came to power through a constitutional process. And Kuwait could not withstand the international pressure that would result if it suspended democracy, especially in the light of recent elections in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, and the Palestinian territories. Finally, he said that the royal family may have started rumors of unconstitutional dissolution to see if the U.S. would give its tacit approval. According to Al-Sager, the Amir would have gone through with unconstitutional dissolution only with the blessing of the U.S.

12. (C/NF) Al-Sager complained of the growing influence of Islamists, such as Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Cabinet Affairs Ismail Al-Shatti, through whom all parliamentary work had to pass. However, he also said his group of liberals (here he was referring to the four most liberal MPs: himself, Ali Al-Rashed, Mishari Al-Anjari, and Faisal Al-Shaye) was getting stronger, citing the success of the Orange Movement in the June elections and the victory of liberals in Kuwaiti student union elections in Lebanon and the U.S. for the first time in 30 years. (Note: Al-Sager made special note of the fact that the term "liberal" might describe the position he and his allies take on economic issues, but that it was probably a misnomer for his group overall. He preferred the word "independent." Most observers of the political scene in Kuwait -- including Kuwaitis -- usually label those with an independent secular-leaning outlook as "liberal," though these liberals are generally much more socially conservative than what Americans consider "liberal." End Note.)

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